24 June 1985

CIA POLYGRAPH PROGRAM - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Polygraph testing has played a crucial role in the Central Intelligence Agency's security program for the past 36 years. During this time, the CIA has developed incontrovertible evidence of the value of this vital procedure.

The CIA's experience with polygraph involves close to a million separate polygraph charts. The value of the polygraph, indeed its indispensability, is clearly reflected in the fact that about 80 percent of the security disapproval decisions taken by the CIA's Director of Security are based on information developed during the polygraph examination.

The polygraph program of the CIA is not limited to applicant screening - the testing of all persons employed by, assigned to or detailed to the CIA in a staff-like status. Polygraph interviews are also conducted on operational assets in direct support of the Agency's foreign intelligence-gathering activities. On a periodic basis, all CIA employees are subjected to retesting. CIA also utilizes the polygraph in certain industrial security cases involving particularly sensitive programs.

The CIA polygraph program is closely controlled and managed by the Agency's Office of Security, following strict guidelines established by the Director of Central Intelligence. Polygraph examiners are generally selected from the ranks of professional security officers who have had on-the-job experience and who were initially the subjects of a rigorous selection process prior to entering the Security career field. All examiners are volunteers and are carefully selected for their maturity, emotional stability, evenhandedness and dedication. They receive their formal training at the CIA Polygraph School and then must complete a 9-12 month probationary period under the close scrutiny of experienced Agency examiners.

Over and above the initial training and probationary period, a strict quality control program is designed to ensure that the highest technical standards are met by all examiners, whether at the apprentice or senior examiner level. All charts are reviewed by supervisory personnel who also provide ongoing guidance and monitor as necessary during the course of actual polygraph examinations.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence completed a detailed study on security clearance procedures in the Intelligence Agencies in September 1979, at which time there was a full review of the CIA's polygraph program. The staff report concluded that the CIA's "security clearance procedures appear to be the most comprehensive and stringent in the Intelligence Community.